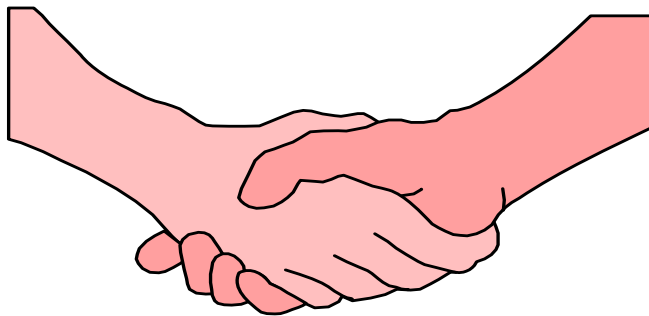


**MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation**

# **RAPID RESPONSE**

*We are here to help you.*



**Department of Labor Web Site: [www.Maine.gov/labor](http://www.Maine.gov/labor)**

A toll-free number **1-800-593-7660** is available to use anywhere inside or outside the state of Maine to file an unemployment claim, speak to an unemployment claims representative, check on the status of a benefit check, or to just find out more about the **Unemployment Insurance Program**. Below are the mailing addresses for the Unemployment Compensation (UC) Claim Centers. The UC Claim Centers are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

<b>TTY for Deaf / Hard of Hearing: 1-888-457-8884</b>
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Please read this **RAPID RESPONSE** handout because it contains important information about filing claims for unemployment benefits. If you have questions at any time about unemployment compensation, call our toll tree number **1-800-593-7660**. Do not rely on relatives, friends or neighbors to answer your questions. The TTY number for deaf/hard of hearing is: 1-888-457-8884.

**GENERAL INFORMATION:** Unemployment Compensation is paid for by your employer. Nothing is taken out of your check to cover this tax. It is like an insurance policy your employer has paid to help you with your bills if you are unemployed through no fault of your own. It is not welfare or based on your financial need.

## **YOUR MONETARY DETERMINATION**

**TO QUALIFY:** You must have earned a minimum amount of money within a specific time – this is called your **base period**. Once you file a claim, you will have established a “benefit year” which continues for 52 weeks. This does not mean that you can collect benefits for 52 weeks, but this is the period of time you will be able to “draw down” your benefits. Your weekly and maximum benefits may differ from year to year.

**Monetary Determination:** Your monetary determination form will show the wages that you have earned during the one-year base period. Your earnings during the base period determine if you have earned enough to establish, or set up an unemployment claim benefit year, and if so the amount of benefits for which you will be eligible. If you did not earn enough money to qualify during this period, our claims representatives will then try to set up a claim using the alternate base.

**"Regular" Base Period:** We will first look at your earnings in the "REGULAR" base period, which is the first 4 of the last 5 completed calendar quarters prior to the date that you file your claim. (See the darker shaded area on the chart below.)

**IF** you file your claim during one of the months identified with an arrow (➔), **THEN** the "REGULAR Base Period" will be the 4 quarters in the darker shaded area.

Oct. Nov. Dec.	Jan. Feb. Mar.	Apr. May June..	July Aug. Sep.	Oct. Nov. Dec.	➔ Jan. ➔ Feb. ➔ Mar.			
	Jan. Feb. Mar.	Apr. May June.	July Aug. Sep.	Oct. Nov. Dec.	Jan. Feb. Mar.	➔ Apr. ➔ May ➔ June		
		Apr. May June	July Aug. Sep.	Oct. Nov. Dec.	Jan. Feb. Mar.	Apr. May June	➔ July ➔ Aug. ➔ Sep.	
			July Aug. Sep.	Oct. Nov. Dec.	Jan. Feb. Mar.	Apr. May June	July Aug. Sep.	➔ Oct. ➔ Nov. ➔ Dec.
Year Before Last (2004)	Last Year (2005)				This Year (2006)			

**"Alternate" Base Period:** The "Alternate" Base Period is the last 4 completed calendar quarters prior to the date you file your claim. This means that we will substitute the most recently completed calendar quarter for the oldest quarter used in your "Regular" Base Period. For example, if you filed your claim in August, the **"Alternate" Base Period would be from July of the previous year to June of the current year.** **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you receive a form telling you that you do not have enough wages and that a "redetermination" will be mailed, you should continue to send in **weekly** claims while the "Alternate" Base Period is checked.

**"Alternate" Base Period Monetary Determination:** In some cases, we will ask you to provide us with a listing of your earnings. **You must continue to file weekly claims during the period of investigation.** After we finish processing your "Alternate" Base Period claim, we will send you another Monetary Determination. This second letter will tell you if you can qualify to set up a claim using the "Alternate" Base Period.

**Weekly Benefit Amount (WBA):** Your weekly unemployment benefit amount depends on your earnings in the base period. For individuals filing a **new** unemployment claim between June 1, 2006, and May 31, 2007, benefits range from \$56 to \$320 – the maximum weekly benefit amount that any one can receive.

**Maximum Benefits Available (MBA):** Once you set up an unemployment claim, it last for 52 weeks, a so-called "benefit year". During this benefit year, the total amount of benefits that you can collect depends on your earnings in the base period. The highest number of full

weekly checks you can collect is **26**, although many individuals are eligible for fewer than 26 weeks.

## WEEKLY ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

**To be eligible for unemployment benefits, each week you must:**

### BE ABLE TO WORK AND AVAILABLE FOR WORK

**Able to Work:** You must be physically able to work *full-time* in your normal occupation or in another occupation for which you are qualified if the majority of wages earned in your base period was from full-time work. If you are physically restricted to only working part-time, you must report this to the UC Claims Center. If the majority of the wages earned in your base period was from part-time work, you must be physically able to work *at least* a comparable number of hours in your normal occupation or in another occupation for which you are qualified.

**Available for Work:** Being available for work means that you must be ready and willing to accept work for which you are qualified under the conditions that are customary for your occupation. These include having transportation to work and child care arrangements (if needed). If your regular occupation involves working on more than one shift, even if you normally worked only one shift, you must be available for all of those shifts.

**Exception:** You will not be denied benefits if:

- 1) You are not available to accept a job on a shift, the greater part of which is between midnight and 5:00 a.m. due to one of the following reasons:
  - a) Parental obligation (caring for your children);
  - b) The need to care for an immediate family member; or
  - c) Because you are handicapped and a personal care attendant who is required to help you is not available.
- 2) The majority (more than 50%) of the weeks you worked during your base period were less than full-time and you are able, available, and actively seeking work for a comparable number of hours in your regular occupation.
- 3) The majority of the weeks worked during your base period were full-time, but you are only able, available, and seeking part-time work due to your own illness or disability, or the illness or disability of an immediate family member, or when necessary for the safety or protection of yourself or an immediate family member, including protection from domestic abuse.

You must report any of the above exceptions to the Bureau when you file a claim. You must also report any days that you were not able or available for work when you file your weekly claim. If you file your weekly claims on a claim card, describe the reason in the Remark section of the card and answer "NO" to Question 1 (if not able to work) or Question 2 (if not available for work).

**Seeking Work:** You must actively search for work each week. This means that you should be contacting employers using the work search methods common to your occupation. These include personally visiting employers, sending letters of application, resumes and, if appropriate, the Internet. The use of letters/resumes or the Internet alone will only be acceptable if that is a normal method of seeking work in your occupation. *Calling prospective employers or looking at newspaper "help wanted" advertisements can help you decide where to apply for work. However, these are **not** considered to be employer contacts for purposes of meeting the active work search requirement.* You will be required to list the employers whom you contacted seeking work on your Work Search Log. You will be asked to fax or mail this log to the Department every few weeks. A new log will be mailed to you approximately every five weeks. Periodically, the work search contact you report will be verified.

**Waiting Week:** Maine law requires a one-week waiting period prior to being eligible to receive a benefit check. The first week in your new benefit year (UC claim year) will normally serve as your waiting period. You must file a weekly claim for this week, but you will not receive a benefit check for that week. If you are not eligible for unemployment benefits for the first week in your benefit year, the next week for which you are eligible for benefits will be your waiting period week. **Do not delay in filing your first weekly claim because of the waiting period week:** To receive a waiting period credit, you must file a claim for that week. If you delay in filing your first claim, your claim for the week after that first week could also be delayed.

**Refusing Work or a Referral to Work:** If you refuse an offer of work from an employer or a referral to a job by the CareerCenter, you may lose your unemployment benefits. A claims adjudicator will interview you to determine if the job or referral you refused was "suitable." You will receive a written notice telling you if you will or will not receive benefits.

**Work and Earnings:** If you work during a week for which you file a claim for unemployment benefits, you must report the gross amount (before deductions) of all wages earned that week even if you have not yet been paid. ***Wages include tips, odd job and self-employment earnings and commission sales.*** You must provide a check stub or other proof of earnings showing the gross amount of your wages for that week. Payment of any benefits due to you will be delayed until that proof is received. While you must report the gross (total) amount of earnings, the first \$25 of earnings will not be deducted from your unemployment check. **REMEMBER: earnings are to be reported for the week you "earned or worked for" the money, not necessarily the week you received your pay.**

**Moving:** If you move outside of Maine, you can still file weekly unemployment claims as long as you are still unemployed. Call the toll-free number (1-800-593-7660) to update your records.

## HOW TO FILE A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

You can file a new or reactivated claim for unemployment benefits by Internet, by telephone or by mail.

**NOTE:** If you filed a new (initial) unemployment claim (benefit year) within the past 12 months, any unemployment claims that you file between now and when that prior claim year ends would be based on that existing claim year.

The Bureau will be asking you for information about yourself and the places that you have worked during the last 18 months. It is very important that you give us your complete and accurate mailing address since the U.S. Postal Service will not forward any Department of Labor mail. If you are using a friend or relative's address, make sure that your name is on their mailbox. If your address changes, either write your new address on your weekly claim card, speak or enter your new address at the prompt when filing weekly claims by telephone or the Internet, or call the 1-800 number and listen for the telephone system option for changing your address.

**BY INTERNET:** You can file a claim via the Internet at [www.file4UI.com](http://www.file4UI.com). If you file your initial claim via the Internet, stay connected until you get a confirmation that your claim has been filed. If you do not have access to the internet at home, all Department of Labor CareerCenters and many libraries have computers you can use to file a claim for benefits.

**BY TELEPHONE:** A toll-free number **1-800-593-7660** is available to use anywhere inside or outside the state of Maine to file an unemployment claim. If you do not have access to a telephone, you may call our offices from any CareerCenter phone.

**1. When your call is answered, you will first be given a series of choices:**

- A. Interpreter Service:** The first choice is whether you need an interpreter. **If you do NOT need an interpreter, just press "2" when given that option.** If English is not your first language and you would like to have an interpreter assist you with your call, we can easily arrange for one in your language. When our telephone systems answers your call, **press "1"** and you will be connected with a claims representative who will make arrangements for an interpreter to assist you.
- B. Other Options:** Next, you will be given several options. Select the option that best describes the reason why you are calling. The telephone system will then connect you with a claims representative who can best meet your needs.

**2. POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES RELATED TO CALLS**

- A. Individuals Without a Telephone:** If you do not have a telephone at home, we offer the following suggestions:
  - 1. Go to a Department of Labor CareerCenter and use a telephone there. There is no charge for using these telephones. Call 1-888-457-8883 to find the center nearest to you.
  - 2. Call from the home of a friend or relative. **Remember, this a toll free call.**
  - 3. Use a pay telephone.
  - 4. File a claim on the Internet or by mail.

- B. Being Placed on Hold or Getting a Busy Signal:** At some times during week (especially on Mondays and Tuesdays in the winter months), many people call the UC Claims Centers. As a result, some callers may be put on hold. If you are put on hold, please stay on the line. If you hang up and call again, your call will be placed at the end of the waiting line. If all lines are busy, you may hear a busy signal. If you get a busy signal, please call back later.

**NOTE:** Calling on Wednesday or Thursday is highly recommend because Mondays and Tuesdays are normally very busy. Filing a new claim later in the week **will not** affect your benefits since all claims filed during a week have a starting date of the Sunday in the week in which you call. If you call on a Friday, forms and notices related to your claim will be mailed to you early in the following week.

**BY MAIL:** To file a new unemployment claim or to reactivate a prior claim by mail, you will need to complete an initial claim form. Unemployment compensation claim forms (Me. B-9.2) are available at:

- All Maine Department of Labor CareerCenters.
- Some city and town offices.
- The Bureau of Unemployment Compensation web site: [www.file4ui.com](http://www.file4ui.com). This form must be printed and then completed and mailed in to one of our UC Claims Centers. Instructions for completing the form are included with the form.
- In some situations, you may be given a claim form by your employer.

**BEFORE YOU FILE A CLAIM:** To file a claim for unemployment insurance, it is important that you have the following information available before you call:

1. Your Social Security Number
2. A list of the employers for whom you have worked during the last 18 months (if filing a new claim), or since you last claimed unemployment benefits (if reactivating an existing claim). You will need the following information for these employers: Complete business name, mailing address with a ZIP Code (this is often available on a check stub), telephone number, and the beginning and ending dates that you worked for each of these employers.

**SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER DISCLOSURE:** The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that we furnish the following statement to you because you are being asked to provide your Social Security Number on all unemployment claim forms:

Your Social Security Number is solicited under the authority of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (26 U.S.C. 85, 6011(a), 6050(b), and 6109(a). Disclosure of your Social

Security Number for this purpose is mandatory. It must be entered on the forms that you submit to claim unemployment compensation.

## INFORMATION AND FORMS THAT WILL BE MAILED TO YOU

Within a few days after you have filed your unemployment claim you will receive several items by mail:

1. **Monetary Determination:** This is a blue sheet of paper that shows the employers and wages used to determine how much you will receive in unemployment benefits if you are eligible. Call your UC Claims Center **immediately** if you see any errors on this form. The form includes the following information:
  - a. The date your claim becomes effective and the date your **benefit year ends** (BYE).
  - b. The calendar quarters used to determine your entitlement to benefits. These quarters are called your **base period**.
  - c. Your **weekly benefit amount** (WBA).
  - d. Your **maximum benefit amount** (MBA). This is the total amount of regular benefits you may receive in your benefit year.
2. A blue information booklet entitled ***“What Every Worker Should Know About Unemployment Insurance”***. You should **read this blue booklet** very carefully. It will help you to understand what you need to do to meet the eligibility requirements under the Unemployment Insurance Program.
3. **Weekly Claim Instruction Sheet:** This pink sheet has information on how to file your weekly claims for benefits by Internet, telephone or by mail using weekly claim forms. On the back of the form is the schedule for the “Benefits Rights Information” video that is shown on the Maine Public Broadcasting System.
4. A yellow **Form W-4V, Withholding Certificate for Voluntary Withholding of Taxes From Your Unemployment Compensation:** Unemployment Insurance payments are taxable for both Federal and State income tax purposes. If you would like to have taxes taken out of your weekly unemployment check, complete this form and return it to the address on the form. If taxes are not withheld, you would pay your income taxes on your unemployment benefits when you file your tax return. (There is a special line on your Federal income tax form for listing unemployment benefit payments.)

**Note:** If you had unemployment taxes withheld in a previous benefit year (even if has been several years since you last filed), taxes **will** be withheld on your new claim year unless you return Form W-4V indicating that you do **not** want them withheld. If you no longer want taxes withheld, you must return a completed Form W-4V indicating the choice to **not** have taxes withheld.

If you were paid unemployment benefits in during the calendar year, then in January of the next year, you will receive a form 1099-G that will show the amount of unemployment benefits that were paid to you during the previous calendar year.

5. **A Weekly Claim Card, Form Me. B-100:** In a separate envelope, you will receive your unemployment claim card for the first week of your claim year. If you decide to file your weekly claim forms by mail, carefully and completely fill out these cards each week. At the present time, regardless of how you file your weekly claim, you will continue to receive a weekly claim card in the mail each week. If you decide to file your weekly claims by the Internet or by telephone, you do not need to mail in the claim cards.
6. **A Work Search Log:** This form is used to record your weekly work search contacts for approximately a 5-week period. If you run out of room, write your contacts on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to the original form. You will be asked to fax or mail this log to the Department every few weeks. **Keep this form safe! If you fail to return it when requested, it could result in denial of your benefits.** A new form will be mailed to you about every five weeks. If your return to work, mail your completed log to your Claims Center as soon as you start your new job.
7. **A Dependency Form:** If, when you filed your new unemployment claim, you said that you wanted to file a claim for dependency allowances (additional unemployment benefits paid to individuals with dependent children), this form will also be mailed to you separately. Spouses are not considered dependents. When your form is returned to the UC Claims Center, it will be reviewed and processed. If it is determined that you do not qualify for dependency allowances, you will receive a Deputy's Decision explaining why you cannot receive these additional benefits.

## **VACATION, SEVERANCE, HOLIDAY, BONUS, AND OTHER NON-WAGE PAYMENTS**

If you receive any payments from your employer that are in addition to your regular earnings from working, report that amount in Question 7 on your weekly claim card or when asked to do so if filing by telephone or the Internet. The types of payments that are in addition to pay that you receive from working are deducted as follows:

1. **Severance Pay, Dismissal Wages, and Terminal Pay:** Deducted, dollar-for-dollar, from your unemployment check for the week in which they are paid. (Exception: If you are paid weekly, then these payments will apply to a period equal to that period. For example, if you are paid every two weeks, these payments would be deducted from two unemployment checks.)
2. **Vacation Pay:** Deducted, dollar-for-dollar, for a period equal to the number of vacation pay days for which you are paid.
3. **Holiday Pay:** Deducted, dollar-for-dollar, from the unemployment check for the week in which the holiday falls, *regardless of when the holiday pay is paid to you.*

4. **Wages in Lieu of Notice:** Deducted, dollar-for-dollar, for the period covered by the notice. For example: your employer lays you off on Tuesday but will pay you through the end of your current pay week which ends on Friday

**The total amount of the payments listed above will be deducted dollar-for-dollar from your unemployment check.**

5. **Bonus Payments:** Deducted, starting with the week in which it is paid, and continuing for the number of weeks that equal your regular pay. For example, if you received a bonus that was equal to three weeks wages, the bonus would be deducted from your unemployment claim for the week in which it is paid and the next two weeks. (You must report your entire bonus payment. However, the first \$25.00 of bonus will not be deducted from your unemployment check.)

## **FACT-FINDING INTERVIEWS**

Whenever a question is raised about your eligibility for unemployment benefits (for example, if you received vacation pay, were not able to work, filed a weekly claim card late, etc.), you will receive a notice. This notice has two parts. The top part, which you should keep, tells you the date and time that a claims adjudicator will call you to obtain information about your situation. Answer the questions on the bottom part of the form and return it immediately so that the claims adjudicator will have it available during the interview. **It is very important that you participate in these interviews.** If you cannot be available at the scheduled date and time, it is your responsibility to call you UC Claims Center as soon as possible after your scheduled time.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Regardless of how you file your weekly claim for benefits, as soon as the Bureau reviews and processes your claim, a claim card for the following week will be mailed to you. If you choose to file your claims by telephone or the Internet you do not need to mail the card back. If you file your weekly claims by telephone (**1-800-593-7660**) or the Internet, you may receive your benefit check more quickly because they generally do not require review by staff.

**When You Should Expect Your Checks/Claim Cards:** If you are eligible for unemployment benefits, your first check will be mailed to you about three weeks after you file your initial claim. However heavy workloads (especially during the winter), holiday periods, and other factors may cause delays in the processing of benefit checks. As mentioned previously, if you file your weekly claims via the Internet or by telephone, you will likely receive your benefits checks sooner as the receipt and acceptance of your claim does not depend on the volume of mail delivered to our offices. You can check on the status of your most recent weekly unemployment claim by using the information option of our telephone system. (Call the toll-free number (**1-800-593-7660**)). You should allow **seven days** after you mail/file your claim before calling a claims representative to ask about your check.

**Messages Sent With Weekly Claim Cards:** Sometimes, a special message will be attached to your weekly claim card. **Read these messages carefully and follow their instructions.** If you do not follow the instructions in the message, your benefits could be delayed or denied.

**Filing Weekly Claims by Mail:** If you file your weekly claim by mail, be sure that you have answered all the questions and have signed your claim form. **If your card is incomplete and/or not signed, your benefits will be delayed and may be denied for the week.**

**MAILING ADDRESSES FOR FILING YOUR WEEKLY CLAIMS:**

Bureau of Unemployment Compensation Weekly Claims Unit P. O. Box 4200 Lewiston, ME 04243-4200 Fax: (207) 753-2851	Bureau of Unemployment Compensation Weekly Claims Unit P.O. Box 610 Orono, ME 04473-0610 Fax: (207) 561-4665
Bureau of Unemployment Compensation Weekly Claims Unit P. O. Box 1088 Presque Isle, ME 04769-1088 Fax: (207) 764-2142	Bureau of Unemployment Compensation <b>Special Programs Unit</b> P.O. Box 259 Augusta, ME 04332-0259 <b>Tel: (207) 287-4560</b> Fax: (207) 287-3395

**PLEASE READ AND KEEP IN A SAFE PLACE, THE BLUE BOOKLET THAT WILL BE SENT TO YOU WHEN YOU FILE A NEW CLAIM FOR BENEFITS. THIS BOOKLET CONTAINS YOUR RIGHTS AND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES.**

The Maine Department of Labor is an equal opportunity employer / program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.